



British Officer of the Royal Engineer Army Estate Organization presents a plaque to Dean of Academics Dr. Ursula G. Lohmann.
(Photo by Diane A. Grant)

British Officer Attends Garrison Precommand Course

FORT BELVOIR, Va.—The first day of class began as expected, with the roomful of military officers looking nervously at each other, wondering what to expect during the next three weeks. Surely it was comforting to know they all wore the same green uniform – or did they? Eyes widened as they spied a stranger in their midst – obviously a military officer, but what service did the khaki-colored uniform represent? It didn't take long to discover that AMSC's most recent Garrison Precommand Course was hosting one of the United Kingdom's finest, an officer from the Royal Engineers.

Lt. Col. John F. Pelton was invited to attend the course by Maj. Gen. Robert L. Van Antwerp, assistant chief of staff for Installation Management, following an information-gathering trip made last year by Van Antwerp and Brig. Gen. Tom Foulkes, assistant secretary of the Army for

Installations and Environment. During that trip, both generals discussed installation management and exchanged information and strategies with senior British military leaders. At that time, both parties agreed that it would be a great idea to strengthen the bond even more by sending a British officer to GPC.

The married father of two says it was very important to him to learn about the American military system and how it works, because America is known worldwide for its strong defense.

Pelton says he saw many similarities between the two military organizations, including base realignment and closure as well as force restructuring. The British armed forces is currently undergoing a major restructuring of its own, realizing in the process that like their American counterparts, installation infrastructures have been under funded over the years.

Pelton also said he noticed some obvious differences between the two nations armed forces. For instance, he said he was shocked to learn about the living conditions in U.S. Army barracks and family housing. He also said both the UK's budget process and its military structure are very different, as is the military history – the British Army is tied to a totally different type of system and is viewed differently by their public.

Pelton says his first experience attending an U.S. military school and specifically the GPC was invaluable. Pelton said that as the course progressed, he realized the value of establishing a similar course for the British Army. He said he will write a detailed report of his experiences and what he learned and will use it to encourage support for other British officers wishing to attend GPC. Likewise, he hopes AMSC faculty will extend the venture by serving as guest speakers for their sister program. Pelton presented a Royal Engineer Army Estate Organization appreciation plaque to AMSC Dean, Dr. Ursula G. Lohmann.

GPC ended on February 15th. After visiting his parents in Buffalo, N.Y., Pelton returned to the United Kingdom as the commanding officer of the 62nd Commander Royal Engineer [works], responsible for construction and supervision of multidisciplinary engineer designs and management of facilities and operations. The Honorable Geoffrey Prosch, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment conducted an after action review of the course and several members of the class proposed that future GPC classes include a British officer.